



United States Department of the Interior
Front Range Center

Bureau of Land Management
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3170 E Main Street
Canon City, CO 81212

News Release

Contact:

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BLM REQUESTING COMMENTS ON CLEAN UP OF THE DINERO TUNNEL

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has been studying the acidic mine drainage from the Dinero Tunnel and other mine waste sources upstream in Sugar Loaf Gulch. The purpose of the study is to analyze potential ways to remove contaminants at the site. The agency is asking for comments from the public on the study and proposal to remedy the contamination.

The Dinero Tunnel is located five miles west of Leadville, Colorado and approximately ¼ mile southwest of Sugarloaf Dam (Turquoise Lake). The Dinero Tunnel is located on private land; however, because of its impacts on adjacent and downstream public lands, the Bureau of Land Management in cooperation with the private landowner, the Colorado Division of Minerals and Geology, and other members of the Lake Fork partnership are proposing cleanup activity on the site.

Sugar Loaf Gulch flows into Lake Fork Creek, which then flows into the Arkansas River. Water quality in Sugar Loaf Gulch and Lake Fork Creek exceeds standards for acidity and toxic metals including iron, manganese, and zinc. This contamination is primarily the result of historic mining activity in the Sugarloaf Mining District. Biological surveys of underwater insects and fish indicate that aquatic life is absent or impaired for several miles downstream of the confluence of Sugar Loaf Gulch and Lake Fork Creek. In addition, the toxic metals adversely affect wildlife resources, wetland and riparian habitat, recreation, and water supply in the upper Arkansas River watershed.

In 2000, a pro-active stakeholder group came together to tackle these water quality issues associated with the Lake Fork Creek watershed. The Lake Fork Creek Watershed Working Group is comprised of representatives from several federal and state agencies, Lake County, private landowners and concerned citizens. Faculty from Colorado Mountain College and staff and students from the Natural Resource Management Program actively participate in the partnership.

Previously the focus had been on the clean up and removal of three mine waste dumps in the area, such as the 2001 removal, by BLM, of a mine waste dump at the Nelson Tunnel to an engineered repository. The overall goal is to reduce the release of contaminants and restore aquatic life to the wetland and Lake Fork Creek. Numerous academic and agency studies document the Dinero Tunnel as the most significant contributor of acidic mine drainage in the watershed.

A copy of the Dinero Tunnel Engineering Evaluation and Cost Analysis is available for review at the Colorado Mountain College library. The public is invited to comment on the document until June 9, 2006. After that period, BLM will review the comments received and make changes as needed to the document.

Comments should be submitted in writing to the Bureau of Land Management, 3170 E. Main Street, Canon City, CO 81212 and attention to Dan Grenard.

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